

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 FREETO 01915 151355Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PM-05 NSC-05

SP-02 SS-15 /048 W

-----074055 160559Z /13

R 151220Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7874

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 1915

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SL

SUBJECT: INAUGURATION OF SIERRA LEONE'S ONE PARTY STATE

1. SUMMARY. IN REFERENDA HELD IN SIERRA LEONE'S THREE PROVINCES PLUS THE WESTERN AREA, SIERRA LEONEANS VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY IN FAVOR OF THE ONE-PARTY STATE CONSTITUTION PASSED BY PARLIAMENT IN LATE MAY. ON JUNE 14 PRESIDENT STEVENS TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE AS PRESIDENT UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION IN A SHORT AND SIMPLE CEREMONY ATTENDED BY THE CABINET, MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND WHAT THE INFORMATION MINISTRY CALLED "A CROSS-SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY." END SUMMARY.

2. IN LATE MAY PARLIAMENT, DOMINATED BY PRESIDENT STEVENS'S ALL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (APC) ACCEPTED THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED ONE-PARTY STATE CONSTITUTION. ONLY THREE MEMBERS OF THE SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY'S (SLPP) 11-MAN OPPOSITION DELEGATION VOTED AGAINST THE MEASURE. SINCE THEN, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 FREETO 01915 151355Z

TWO MEMBERS (INCLUDING OPPOSITION LEADER JUSU SHERIFF), ALL OF THE OPPOSITION HAS GONE OVER TO THE APC. IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE MEASURE REFERENDA WERE HELD SUCCESSIVELY IN THE NORTHERN (JUNE 5), EASTERN (JUNE 7), AND SOUTHERN (JUNE 9) PROVINCES WITH THE GRAND FNALE ON JUNE 12 IN THE WASTERN AREA WHICH IS FREETOWN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS. THE TOTAL VOTE AS ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, WAS 2,152,460 IN

FAVOR OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND 63,132 OPPOSED. THIS IS A TRULY REMARKABLE VOTING RECORD IN A COUNTRY WHOSE POPULATION IS BELIEVED TO BE 3.1 MILLION PEOPLE OF WHOM APPROXIMATELY 50 PERCENT ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 15 YEARS. THOUGH THE POLICE AND APC PARTY STALWARTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED AS ROUGHING UP SOME VOTERS IN VARIOUS AREAS, THE REFERENDA, IN SHARP CONTRAST TO LAST YEAR'S ELECTION, TOOK PLACE IN GENERALLY PEACEFUL CONDITIONS. STORIES ABOUND, HOWEVER, ABOUT CHIEFS CASTING VOTES FOR THEIR WHOLE VILLAGE, OF PARTY MEMBERS BEING GIVEN DOZENS OF VOTING BALLS TO DROP IN THE PRO BOX AND OF SIMILAR CHICANERY. EACH VOTER WAS REQUIRED TO DROP HIS VOTING BALL INTO ONE OF TWO BOXES, A RED BOX FOR THE ONE-PARTY CONSTITUTION OR A BLACK BOX FOR "NO" VOTES. STORIES WERE SPREAD THAT THE RED BOX REPRESENTED LIFE AND LIGHT WHILE THE BLACK BOX REPRESENTED DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. ONE OF THE EMBASSY'S LOCAL EMPLOYEES REPORTED THAT HER MOTHER TOOK THE EMPLOYEE'S LITTLE GIRL TO THE POLLS WITH HER AND THAT THE GIRL WAS GIVEN TWO BALLS TO DROP IN THE RED BOX. WHILE THE EMPLOYEE HERSELF WAS AT THE POLLS, A SINGLE VOTER WAS GIVEN 12 BALLS BUT MISTAKENLY DROPPED THEM IN THE BLACK BOX. THE BOX WAS TAKEN AWAY AND PRESUMABLY EMPTIED.

3. IN SPITE OF THSE PRACTIC ES, FOREIGN OBSERVERS IN FREETOWN AGREE THAT THE APC CAMPAIGN IN FAVOR OF THE ONE-PARTY STATE CONSTITUTION WOULD HAVE WON EVEN IF THE ELECTION HAD BEEN CONDUCTED UNDER PRISTINE-PURE CONDITIONS.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 FREETO 01915 151355Z

THE OPPOSITION HAS BEEN AN INEFFECTIVE FORCE FOR SOME TIME AND HAD NO STRENGTH AND APPARENTLY NO MONEY TO MOUNT A STRONG CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ONE-PARTY STATE. MORE IMPORTANT IS THE GENERAL ATTITUDE WHICH IS LARGELY ONE OF APATHY. SIERRA LEONEANS SEEM RESIGNED TO THE FACT THAT THE ONE-PARTY STATE WAS BOUND TO COME.

4. THE NEW CONSTITUTION PROVIDED THAT PRESIDENT STEVENS WILL CONTINUE TO BE PRESIDENT OF SIERRA LEONE AND THAT HE WILL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO A NEW TERM OF OFFICE FOR A PERIOD OF SEVEN YEARS(THE OLD CONSTITUTION PROVIDED FOR A FIVE-YEAR PRESIDENTIAL TERM OF OFFICE). THE NEW CONSTITUTION DROPS THE OFFICES OF VICE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER IN FAVOR OF AN OFFICE OF FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND AN OFFICE OF SECOND VICE PRESIDENT. CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION CONTINUES AS TO WHO WILL BE APPOINTED (BY THE PRESIDENT) TO THESE POSTS. MOST LIKELY FORMER VICE PRESIDENT KOROMA AND FORMER PRIME MINISTER KAMARA-TATKIR WILL ASSUME THESE POSTS.

5. THE FIRST PARLIAMENT TO BE HELD UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL BE OPENED JUNE 16. PRESIDENT STEVENS

IS EXPECTED TO RESHUFFLE HIS CABINET AS WELL AS TO
INDICATE WHAT HE EXPECTS TO ACCOMPLISH AS HEAD OF THE
NEW ONE-PARTY STATE. AS HE PREVIOUSLY INDICATED TO
THE AMBASSADOR, HE HOPES TO ELIMINATE POLITICAL AND
TRIBAL FRICTION AND TO GET ON WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF
SIERRA LEONE. WHETHER OR NOT HE CAN ACCOMPLISH THESE
AIMS REMAINS PROBLEMATIC. MENDE OPPOSITION, THOUGH
QUIET AT THIS PERIOD, WILL NOT LIKELY DISAPPEAR.
LINEHAN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INAUGURATION, ONE PARTY GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978FREETO01915
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780251-0640
Format: TEL
From: FREETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780657/aaaabwwf.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 889f6088-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2342941
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INAUGURATION OF SIERRA LEONE'S ONE PARTY STATE
TAGS: PGOV, SL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/889f6088-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014